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THE VALE OF ARDEN  
AND OTHER POEMS  
BY ALFRED HAYES



LONDON JOHN LANE  
AT THE SIGN OF THE  
BODLEY HEAD



July 2nd

1864

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THE VALE OF ARDEN

*The twelve poems immediately following the Dedication originally appeared in a privately issued volume, entitled "A Fellowship in Song," written in collaboration with Mr Norman Gale and Mr Richard Le Gallienne. For permission to reprint two poems the Author's thanks are due to the Editors of "The Spectator" and "The Yellow Book."*

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ALFRED HAYES



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## Dedication

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### TO MY WIFE

BELOVÉD wife,  
For ever mine, not by the rash  
Consuming kiss  
Whose fierce flame turns to early ash,  
But by the love that is  
The sunshine of the tree of life ;

Thy love, that lent  
Its morning breath to song, hath hushed  
My manlier lute ;  
As birds that pipe when dawn is flushed,  
Or eve is wan, are mute  
At noontide of their full content.

When love had birth,  
My heart became a secret shell  
Where many an air  
Moaned of the sea of love—Ah! well,  
Those songs, my sweet, will share  
Our slumber in the sacred earth;

And now that day  
Is darkened by the hand of death,  
In warning raised,  
And the dread angel threateneth,  
While love recoils amazed,  
The hour wherein the soul grows gray;

Again my heart  
Is shaken into song; for so  
I need thy love  
As blossoms need the light, and know  
This paradise will prove  
A wilderness if thou depart.

Therefore I crave  
With all my selfish strength that thou  
May'st close mine eyes,  
Not I, belovéd, thine ; death's brow  
Frowns not on him that dies,  
But him that kneels beside the grave.

Nor could my loss  
So harm thee, as thy loss would blight  
My lonelier soul ;—  
But ah ! thy tears !—'tis well that night  
Obscures the shore, where roll  
The waters each must singly cross.

Is love afraid  
Of love's best friend ? Is it to see  
His picture wear  
Its highest holiest light, that He  
Who painted love so fair  
Hath edged it with so deep a shade ?

Thy beauty glows  
The brighter for this cloud, fair flower  
Suffused with light  
Of love's own sun, whose gracious power  
Evil and good unite  
To praise, as all men praise the rose.

Still would I woo  
To win thee, though I have by rote  
Thy sure consent ;  
For thou art mistress of each note  
Of love's sweet instrument,  
And art as free as thou art true.

I ask no life  
Beyond this homely earth, so God  
The boon bestow  
Of autumn calm, and, ere the sod  
Receive us, days of snow  
For closer nestling, faithful wife.

But whether long  
Or brief our transient honeymoon,  
We'll share at last  
One dwelling, where in love's high noon  
Our dearest days were passed,  
Not far from Avon's slumber-song.





## TO NORMAN GALE

*(With that portion of "A Fellowship in Song" entitled  
"From Midland Meadows.")*

FRIEND, whom I met in fruitful days  
Rambling amid sequestered ways  
    Of rustic song,  
These flowers, in midland meadows grown  
While yet I walked and mused alone,  
Pleased to be laid beside thine own,  
    To thee belong.

We both have worshipped the pure rest  
Of Arden's gently sloping breast,  
    With faith sincere ;

The simple breadth of view, that fills  
Our famished souls, the voice that stills,  
The comfort of the lowly hills,  
To both are dear.

Oft have we blest each woodland throat,  
Have held our breath for some rare note  
In secret brake ;  
Together watched the moon sail through  
Mysterious seas of hoary blue,  
Or stars mid billowy clouds pursue  
Her amber wake ;

Then, flushed with winter's honest kiss,  
Have heard the yule-log snap and hiss,  
While songs, unsung  
By souls that glowed apart before,  
Leapt from our spirits' molten ore,  
As from the fire's refulgent core  
Tongue leapt to tongue.

Age will abate the lyric flame,  
The grave's dull tooth consume our name ;  
    But hap what may,  
Friend, we have captured fugitive  
Fine joys, whose music will outlive  
All the discordant world can give  
    Or take away.

## THE VALE OF ARDEN

HERE, in this maze of stifling streets,  
Where heaven's own eye looks sick and spent,  
Where day to day care's curse repeats,  
And nature's priceless poesy  
Is bartered for a glittering discontent,  
I would not choose to die.

But when with weary feet I turn,  
Baffled, from truth's continual quest,  
And hope's rich bow hath ceased to burn,  
And, heard afar, the curfew-bell  
Calleth my heart home to the quiet breast  
Of her I love so well—

Dear mother Earth—I fain would watch  
The wisdom of thy gradual ways  
From underneath some ancient thatch,  
Where all that toucheth eye or ear  
Keepeth the simple tone of those good days  
When childhood's fount ran clear ;

There to abide, and hold awhile  
Communion with thy soul, and mark  
Thy reverend visage frown and smile,  
And woo the secret of the breeze,  
While dawn grows noon and noon declines to dark  
By unperceived degrees ;

So, made at one with thee, to taste  
Contentment's temperate cup, nor spill  
One precious drop in needless haste,  
But, with youth's fever-dream subdued,  
Let Nature's sovereign alchemy distil  
The balm of quietude ;

And feel her healing influence fall,  
As when upon a sufferer's head  
A hand is laid, medicinal  
To put the lean and clamorous brood  
Of pain-begotten cares to flight, and spread  
A slumber through the blood.

Embosomed shall my cottage be  
In woodlands, whence the village spire  
Peeps, and the overflowing glee  
Of lips that cannot long be sad  
Makes with the songbirds' sweet untutored quire  
Music divinely glad ;

Not where the cloud-encumbered brows  
Of mountains brood o'er barren dales,  
And many a fretful torrent flows ;  
Nor where, with slow-returning sigh,  
The sleepless surge eternally bewails  
Life's lonely mystery ;

But where, by moss-grown watermills  
And willowy meadows fringed with reed,  
Old Avon creeps beside the hills  
That shelter, not seclude, the plain,  
And peaceful kine o'er sunny pastures feed  
Refreshed with genial rain.

There, in the softly sloping lap  
Of England's peace, where hedges trim  
Chequer the lea, and mists enwrap  
Each hidden hamlet, waits my home—  
A drowsy region, friendly unto him  
That asks no more to roam ;

There Shakespeare's self was moulded ; there  
He wooed his love, he wove his verse ;  
There his full soul grew ripe ; and ere  
His song was stilled, on that kind breast  
Contented well to sleep, he laid a curse  
On who should break his rest.

A land where venerable trees  
Whisper to many a storied grange,  
Where orchards slumber, and the breeze  
Comes laden with the breath of flowers,  
And all things bask, and nothing swift or strange  
Disturbs the loitering hours.

No sea-blast warps the stateliness  
Of those great elms ; but wafted mild  
From the warm hills the large airs bless  
The mellow midland vale ; and all  
That liveth where its generous sun hath smiled  
Doth goodly grow and tall.

Not desolate is he that dwells  
In that still country ; all around  
Breathes a familiar voice, that tells  
The soul's desire is satisfied,  
And man with every earth-born thing is bound  
In kindred close and wide.



The murmur of the haunted woods,  
The sombre music of the storm,  
The spell that o'er the distance broods,  
In one broad harmony unite  
Of peace, as blend the rainbow's tones to form  
The perfect chord of light ;

And as of yore rich incense rose,  
When on their knees the people fell  
'Neath some vast dome, so all that grows  
Beneath heaven's roof pays to the sun  
Due worship of earth's sweet and wholesome smell,  
Mingling all life in one ;

The fragrance of the fresh-turned loam,  
Of hawthorn bloom and breathing hay,  
The slumbrous air of harvest-home,  
Find each in man their counterpart,  
And make the echoes of old memories play  
About his listening heart ;

Whether through greenwood shades he steals,  
Or museth where the landscape sweeps  
Into the realm of dream, he feels  
A sense of great companionship,  
Of one that knoweth all but ever keeps  
A finger on the lip ;

He hears—when not a blade is stirred,  
And, muffled in dense foliage,  
Only the call of some shy bird  
Deepens the silence of the whole—  
He hears a voice whose comfort can assuage  
The fever of his soul.

Gently the seasons twine their arms,  
Lingering amid those tranquil glades,  
Relieving each the other's charms,  
Waking and lulling pure desires—  
A restful loveliness that never fades,  
A change that never tires.

Spring trills her blithest carol there,  
When cowslips fleck the glistening green,  
When swallows cleave the gladsome air  
With rapturous cries, and bursting buds  
Breathe, after showers, a soft mysterious sheen  
Along the sunlit woods.

There, when the hidden dove all day  
Purrs in the coppice dim with heat,  
Reclined beneath a wild-rose spray  
June sleepeth in the still noontide,  
While over fragrant fields of bean and wheat  
The slow cloud-shadows glide.

But chiefly autumn loves to shed  
Her placid sunshine o'er the vale,  
When wide across the mead is spread  
Warm river-mist, and the mild year  
Dreameth, and orchards rich with fruit exhale  
A lustrous atmosphere ;

Then sweet it is, with meek-eyed dawn,  
While yet the shadows of the sheaves  
Stretch far and faint, to pace the lawn  
Dew-silvered ; or to stray with her  
By ragged hedgerows while the reddening leaves  
Are gray with gossamer ;

To watch, when golden afternoon  
Floodeth the garden's sanctuary,  
Bees harvesting the blossom's boon,  
Where mid the stately hollyhocks  
Teems the rich hive, and flits the butterfly  
O'er flower-beds edged with box.

When winter's loud-lunged herald wears  
His motley suit, 'tis good to mark  
Storm-pennons, which the south wind tears  
To tatters, stream across the sky,  
And sun-gleams chequer hamlet, holt and park  
With wild emblazonry,

Chasing the shadows as they sweep  
O'er stubble fields and withered sedge,  
Gilding awhile the ricks that peep,  
Fresh-thatched, where brooding yews protect  
Some low-browed homestead on the river's edge,  
Time-stained and ivy-decked.

Dear too are winter's sober skies  
To him who pants for quiet ; all  
The lavish autumn splendour lies  
Asleep beneath its coverlet  
Of fallen foliage ; and a purple pall  
Clings, when the sun hath set,

To naked woods as soft as clouds ;  
While with cold arm the saintly moon  
Hallows the silent mist that shrouds  
The darkening furrows, and a calm  
Unfelt in springtime's morn or summer's noon  
Sinks on the soul, like balm

On a parched wound. And as the glow  
Of sunlight's pride must perish ere  
The stars can tremble, even so  
Is many a modest beauty bid  
To grace the staid night-season of the year,  
Whom his bright day had hid ;

No longer overgrown with green,  
But gemmed with rain and berry-crowned,  
From each bare hedge the eye may glean  
Soul-sustenance ;—enough to trace  
One spray of white-veined ivy clinging round  
An oak-tree's lichened base ;

Or roaming the chill fields among,  
Where heavily the plough-team moves,  
To hear the robin's slender song,  
When fuller throats have ceased to strain,  
Repeat to flowerless glades and mournful groves  
Its simple sweet refrain ;

And nearing home, through leafless trees  
To see the thin blue smoke ascend,  
Where amid vine-clad cottages  
Life slowly smoulders to its rest,  
Each kindly-hearted swain a natural friend,  
Each roof a human nest.

So would I praise the bounteous year,  
And quickened by earth's close caress,  
Would hold the lowliest weed more dear  
Than all the laboured pomp of art ;  
Eased of the city's crowded loneliness  
Which chokes, yet starves, the heart ;

But strengthened from the living wells,  
And nurtured on the wholesome fare  
Of country sights and sounds and smells,  
Would find beneath the greenwood bough  
All that I loved in childhood unaware,  
And love with worship now.

And let me at the last repose  
Not where along unlovely ways  
The roaring tide of trouble flows,  
But where is heard the bleat of sheep,  
And homely elms, that breathe of by-gone days,  
Watch o'er the churchyard's sleep ;

There by the sweet birds shall be said  
My requiem, and death's garden wear  
A look so kind, that unafraid  
Children shall come to weave a wreath  
Of daisies gathered from my grave, nor care  
Who lieth underneath.



## NOVEMBER

MOURNER, who wanderest gray and mute  
O'er mouldering leaves and fallen fruit,  
Weep, unproved !  
Thou art not for thy sombre suit  
The less beloved.

Welcome as April's bridal tears,  
Or the ripe smile September wears,  
Are thy grave eyes,  
Made wistful with the agéd year's  
Dim memories.

Thine are the dawns of solemn sheen,  
Through interwoven branches seen,  
    As when doth smite  
Through some cathedral's carven screen  
    The altar's light.

Thou lendest darkness to the yew,  
To distant hills a deeper blue ;  
    Thy footsteps wake  
Mosses to flower, when flowers are few  
    In leafless brake.

Fair as her liveliest summer dress  
The beech's silver nakedness,  
    When red and gold,  
That robed her for the storm's caress,  
    Her feet enfold.

Through steel-blue clouds a gleaming wedge  
Strikes on the berry-jewelled hedge  
    And dusky wood,  
On osiers smooth and tawny sedge  
    And streams in flood.

And as a child's light laugh beguiles  
Sorrow to lose herself in smiles,  
    The redbreast's lay  
Maketh the woodland's silent aisles  
    Seem almost gay.

'Tis good to watch the loose clouds driven,  
When the broad south their web hath riven,  
    Or pace again  
Beneath a calm snow-burdened heaven  
    The darkening lane,

Strewn with the maple's moth-like seeds,  
And catch the scent of smouldering weeds  
    O'er brown waves borne  
Of fresh-ploughed loam and silent meads  
    And cornfields shorn ;

'Tis good to feel thy teardrops fall  
Upon the dead fern's quiet pall  
    Of purple mist,  
When frost for their snow-burial  
    The wolds hath kissed ;

But best to watch—when death-like eve  
The pensive landscape doth bereave  
    Of short-lived day—  
Thy great pathetic sunsets grieve  
    Their hearts away.

## CONSERVATION

THOU, who from many a spray forlorn  
Its ruddy jewellery hast torn,  
    Belovéd thrush !  
From mountain-ash no need to fly,  
At sight of me, to sanctuary  
    Of laurel-bush.

Plunder thy fill !—my garden yet  
Is sweet with stock and mignonette,  
    With asters gay,  
And of its plenty well can spare,  
O prince of song, the frugal fare  
    It doth purvey.

Soon will the dahlia's pride lie dead,  
The sunflower droop his kingly head,  
    And pinched with cold  
The lordly hollyhock repine  
For still September's mild sunshine  
    And moon of gold.

Then winter with her wailful rains  
Will weep o'er autumn's gaunt remains,  
    Or watch them lie  
Stark in the snow's sepulchral dress,  
Entombed within a featureless  
    Gray vault of sky.

But when I sigh, dear mottled thief,  
For crocus-flower and lilac-leaf  
    Delaying long,  
The vanished splendour of the tree  
Will glow again, conserved by thee,  
    In glorious song.

## ILLUSION

*(Composed on observing that the rainbow, when steadily gazed at,  
disappears.)*

WHEN in despite of care's dead weight,  
And tarnished faith, and hope's decay,  
A gladness stirs thee, delicate  
As the first tremor of the spring  
Or thrill of love's awakening,  
Ask it not Whence—or it will shrink away.

So when the rainbow's transient smile  
Cheereth heaven's gray and tearful face,  
Look lightly on that tender wile ;  
For if too hard, in joy's excess,  
Thou gaze, the specious loveliness  
Will fade as doth a dream, and leave no trace.

## HAYESWATER

ENFOLDED in the mountain's naked arms,  
Where noonday wears a drearier look than night,  
And echo, like a shrinking anchorite,  
Wanders unseen, and shadowy strange alarms  
Visit the soul ; there sunshine rarely warms  
The crags, but only random shafts of light  
Flit, while the black squalls shrilling from the  
height  
Shudder along the lake in scattering swarms.  
Cradle of tempests, whence the whirlwind leaps  
To scourge the billows, till they writhe and rear  
Columns of hissing spray ; the wrinkled steeps  
Scowl at the sullen moaning of the mere ;  
And luminous against the dale-side drear,  
Ghostlike, the rainstorm's scanty vesture sweeps.



## HER FAITH

How quietly the cold hands keep,  
Pressed to the gracious heart that loved their grace,  
Poppies, unconscious of their resting-place,  
Emblems of dreamless sleep.

Around her the star-systems roll  
Through wastes of silence. Yet the enfolding Power,  
That fashioned with such care a senseless flower,  
Will not forsake a soul.

## LIGHT AND LOVE

FRONT not the sun ; or dazzled by his whiteness  
Earth's face will seem expressionless and dim,  
Features confused and beauty drowned in brightness ;  
    But turn from him,  
And thou wilt find familiar scenes and homely  
Transfigured with a tender atmosphere ;  
Scan not the source of all that makes earth comely ;  
    Enough that light is here.

Question not love ; or pondering love's essence  
The wonder of his glory will confound  
Those fair effects that issue from his presence ;  
    But look around,  
And thou wilt find the narrowest prospect spacious,  
And dark perplexities serenely clear ;  
Scan not the source of all that makes life gracious ;  
    Enough that love is here.

## OUR SHAKESPEARE

TO-NIGHT, where'er men boast thy native tongue,  
They crown thy brows anew with solemn bays,  
The cup in silence to thy memory raise,  
Imperial master of the feast of song—  
In seemly silence—for what voice so strong,  
So sweet, as duly to declare thy praise?  
But we, who dwell where Arden yet arrays  
The oaks thou knew'st in green, where glides along  
Gray Avon's peace, by many a gentle bend,  
Through homely pastures, and the bees still sip  
The flowers that heard thy footsteps—we may blend  
Our homage with a sense of fellowship,  
May mark a kindlier smile illumine thy lip,  
And feel thee less our sovereign than our friend.

## PRO TEMPORE

Sick of the tumult, weary of the wail,  
That grateth where the city's breath is sour  
With greed's unclean disease, where children cower  
In noisome dens, and women gaunt and pale  
Pollute their souls for bread, our hearts would fail  
But for the faith that in some wiser hour  
Men will possess in peace the world's rich bower ;  
Envy depart and righteousness prevail.  
And yet, though other eyes than ours will see  
The far fulfilment of our larger hope,  
Justice ordains and pity pleads that we  
Should cull one garland from the sunny slope  
Where ease reclines, to gladden those who grope  
In shades of want and sloughs of misery.

## THE SILENT HARP

POOR harp, how desolate !—The loving hand,  
That wind-like wandered o'er thy tremulous strings,  
Culling sweet sheaves of sound or whisperings  
Æolian, at the Master's mute command  
Drops lifeless. In that unresponsive land  
What music He from earthly sufferings  
Evoketh and the stress of mortal things,  
Wistful we seek but may not understand.  
Yonder may dwell continual peace, but here  
All peace begetteth and is born of strife,  
And every smile is sister to a tear ;  
Death only can the missing note supply  
That shall resolve the discord of this life ;  
Silence alone is perfect harmony.

## THE IDEAL

SORROW for him who evermore hath striven  
To shape the perfect vision of his soul ;  
For gazing up into the face of heaven  
The falling snow seems foul.

## MERRY AUTUMN

GOLDEN woodland, sea-blue sky,  
Crests of cloud-waves tossed on high ;

Bouncing breezes, lustrous showers,  
Leaves and berries gay as flowers ;

Purple storms in rainbow belt,  
Morning frosts that flash and melt ;

Dawns arrayed in gorgeous light,  
Dazzled earth in motley dight.

Robins flute a cheerful tune,  
Orchards glow with apples strewn ;

Sunbeams bless the gathered sheaves,  
Children chase the skipping leaves ;

Buds grow plump in glossy sheath ;—  
Who dare call this rapture death ?

Autumn 's neither sick nor sad ;  
Spring 's begotten ; God is glad.



## THE SEA

ELDEST of singers, never-silent sea,  
Whether in robe of gray or changeful green  
Thou chantest, or in mail of moonlight sheen,  
No ear hath learnt thine open mystery.  
Companion of the world's wide grief, by thee  
We enter—gazing on thy tranquil mien,  
Or hearkening to the tempest's hollow threne—  
The echoing portals of eternity.  
Whether on solemn shores advancing quires  
Of surpliced waves raise the resounding psalm,  
Or prostrate murmur prayer, thy voice avails  
The pulse of man's disquietude to calm ;  
Mourner, whose long complaining never tires,  
Soother, whose consolation never fails.

## IN THE HOUSE OF DEATH

## I.

WITH tears they bring her babe to smile  
The last farewell ; by childhood's grace,  
In death's dark presence-hall awhile  
There shines a cloudless face.

Too young to know the awful bar  
That keeps him from those lips so white,  
He wafts a baby kiss—sweet star  
Unconscious of the night—

And stretches dimpled hands to grasp  
The lilies on her breast, nor knows  
How cold the hands their stems that clasp,  
How deep the breast's repose.

Poor helpless author of our dole,  
Who ne'er shall lisp a mother's name,  
God keep him, till he meet her soul  
From whom he dearly came.

## II.

Beside her fretful infant's cot  
The father bows his stricken head ;  
One lieth near, whose sleep will not  
Be more disquieted.

The daylight faileth ; colourless  
Are all things in the darkening room ;  
Such nightfall doth his soul possess,  
Such dumb and hueless gloom.

With trembling hands the child he takes ;  
He moans a verse the happy wife  
Would croon ; then heaves a sob that shakes  
The very roots of life.

O little arms around him curled,  
Cling closer to what love is left ;  
Thou dost not know of what a world  
Of love thou art bereft.

## THE DAWN OF SPRING

IN the dead of winter's gloom,  
When Earth in her shroud lay stark,  
She dreamt that one day the lark  
Would pierce with his sunny song  
    Her snow-built tomb,  
    And wake into bloom  
The blossom that slept too long.

He is up !—and heaven's deep blue  
Grew deeper for that last strain  
Ere he dived to the warm-bosomed plain ;  
And with what glad bound his voice  
    Pealed forth anew,  
    When again he flew  
To the realms where the clouds rejoice !

He sang, as he stooped to his mate,  
Of the glory of sun and sky ;  
But now the wild poesy,  
That welcomes the first rainbow  
    And storms heaven's gate,  
    Is of joys that wait  
On the breathing earth below.

The passionate hopes that swell  
The great soul in his little breast  
Not even his song hath expressed ;  
Nor the Muse, who has dipped a wing  
    In the living well  
    Of truth, can tell  
The rapture of the spring ;

It leaps in the gladsome air,  
Like wine that hath long lain still  
In the womb of earth, until

At a sunbeam's kiss it breaks  
    Into frolic fair,  
    And fragrance rare  
From its dancing heart awakes ;

For April hath moved grim March  
To smiles, and to tears the snow  
That lurked by the black hedgerow ;  
The brooks prattle loud of the showers ;  
    And to breezes, that parch  
    No more, the larch  
Hath opened her crimson flowers.

Through the wayside herbage sere  
A new-born green upheaves ;  
The hornbeam's shrivelled leaves  
Shudder for shame of their age ;  
    For spring wastes no tear  
    On the buried year,  
But enjoyeth his heritage.

The coltsfoot, that never cringed  
To the tyrannous east, doth make  
Gay mock of his flight ; the brake  
With the haze from its young buds shed  
    Is dimly tinged,  
    And the alder hath fringed  
Its branches with tassels red.

Now gleam in the sun and dance  
The gnats, frail brood of the calm ;  
The bee, on the bee-like palm,  
With his sultry summer sound  
    And slow dalliance  
    Doth disentrance  
The butterfly underground.

The shining team doth crawl  
Over the upland bare ;  
Billows of loam, as the share



Upturneth the good brown land,  
Glistening fall,  
To be crumbled small  
For the seed by the wind's broad hand.

The south her white-winged fleet  
To the dappled hills hath driven ;  
The great warm heart of heaven,  
Where love doth dwell, once more  
Is seen to beat,  
And its genial heat  
Hath opened earth's every pore.

In the depths of the budding grove  
Sweet fountains of feeling start ;  
They well in the old man's heart  
As he lifteth his cottage latch,  
Where the courtly dove  
Makes murmuring love  
To his lady on lichen'd thatch.

The rush of life, which thrills  
The trees into tender sheen,  
The sallow grass into green,  
Is welcome as when the breath  
    Of daffodils  
    Fresh hope instils  
In one who is watched by death.

O bliss ! once more to feel  
The native smell of earth,  
Where the wheat has lowly birth  
Or the violet's lip is curled,  
    Through the sick soul steal,  
    With power to heal  
Like the hope of a better world ;

To feel the soft caress  
Of a breeze, foretelling May,  
O'er the burdened bosom play

And fondle the troubled brow,  
While the sun doth dress  
In new loveliness  
Each smooth sap-swollen bough !

His first hot kiss doth inspire  
Earth's breast with a passion of joy ;  
No more is she hard or coy ;  
Her blood, benumbed so long,  
Is all afire  
With spring's desire,  
And flames into flower and song.

Rejoice !—for care away  
With the black east-wind has flown ;  
Young mirth has mounted his throne ;  
And love, no more heartsick  
At spring's delay,  
Resumes her sway ;  
And the dead has become the quick.

## ON THE MOUNTAIN

I SCALE the fortress where the winds keep ward  
    O'er health's unrifled hoard ;  
Each footstep is an ecstasy ; my blood  
    Leaps with the sparkling flood  
Of sunshine from God's crystal chalice poured.  
    Ascending I behold  
    Earth's ancient scroll unfold ;  
The mountain's naked shoulder screens from view  
The valley of last night's expectant rest,  
Whose hamlet, as the prospect grew,  
    Shrank to a wood-wren's nest.  
Panting with joyful toil at last I stand  
    Where taintless breezes range,  
An infant holding Nature by the hand,  
A new-born creature, to myself most strange ;

Exalted to this sovereign height  
I taste awhile an eagle's lone delight ;  
    Then, as I scan  
    The Maker's outspread plan,  
    My humbled spirit kneels  
    And uncomplaining feels  
    The insignificance of man.  
Around me slumber giant limbs ; below  
The vapours crawl that curtain me from care ;  
    A stream unseen is heard to flow ;  
    The breast of peace lies bare ;  
    Reposing there,  
I gaze along the avenues of air  
To that which seems a sea beyond the sea,  
The dim horizon of eternity.

## FELLOW-CAPTIVES

How blest on earth's green lap to lie,  
Escaped from town's captivity,  
But that its smoke on evening gale  
Far borne—this Eden's serpent-trail—  
Sullies the placid sky ;

Which else were stainless as the hue  
Of those moss-cradled eggs, whose view  
In quaint-cut hedge of town parterre  
Drove me to seek the taintless air  
And unpolluted blue.

Not here, alas !—Full three leagues fled  
From yon grim city, overhead  
Hangs gloom, and silence doth appal  
As in some stricken house where all  
The little ones lie dead.

What evil spell has power to hush  
The rapture of the impassioned thrush?  
What keeps his sable-suited peer  
Dumb, and each dainty sonneteer

Of copse and lisping rush,

That follows summer o'er the foam?  
Or why is heaven's eternal dome  
Vacant of its high chorister?—  
Nature, her music reft from her,  
Is drearier than the home

Whose sadness slowly I regain  
Through ever-deepening shades of pain,  
As ever more the air grows sick  
Where the dull miles of dismal brick  
Spread like a loathsome blain;

My prison, and—God help you!—yours,  
Poor little poets. Man endures  
The woe his own unwisdom yields,  
Who lost the freedom of the fields,  
Misled by his own lures;

But you, whose ditty's simple meed  
Was still to pluck the thistle seed,  
You, bolder finch of sanguine breast,  
And you, small sir, with rosy crest—  
Cursed be the ruffian's greed

That mocked thy love-call, lured the spray  
Where thou didst light to pipe thy lay,  
Tore thee from all thou heldest dear,  
To join thy captive song-mates here—  
A pitiful array

Of joy's own angels doomed to dwell  
Pent in the city's weary hell ;  
For whisperings of the wind-swept wheat,  
The clangour of the jostling street ;  
For clover-breath, the smell

Of factory-fumes ; for heaven's great ring,  
Scarce space to prune an aching wing !  
No more, ensconced in hawthorn flower,  
To weave the wonder of their bower,  
Or feel the fluttering



Of those faint pulses soon to burst  
Each fragile casket !—but accurst  
With man's regard, exiled from nest,  
Woodland and sky and all God's best,  
    To languish mid man's worst.

Is't not enough that lean and pale  
His children pine, but he must hale  
The happiest of created things,  
Made free by God's great gift of wings,  
    To share his crowded jail ?

## A STORM SONG

CHASTEN the land, O wind ;  
Hurl autumn from his throne ;  
Be pitiless, be blind,  
And let the forest groan ;  
The forest's quickened life  
Will bless thee yet ; for thou  
Art God's keen pruning-knife  
That lops each withered bough.

Chasten the land, O war ;  
Consume the false and frail  
With fire of thy red star,  
And let the nation wail ;  
Redeemed by sore distress  
From rottenness of soul,  
'Twill live some day to bless  
The storm that made it whole.

## THE TRYST

THE stars are faint and few,  
The zenith yet is blue ;

By daylight still is seen  
The orchard's tender green,

Whose snowy bloom doth rest  
As clouds on heaven's breast ;

But clear and full and high  
The moon enchants the sky.

When day and moonlight meet  
My heart doth strangely beat ;

For when their lips have kissed,  
I keep my silent tryst

With One, to whom alone  
My inmost heart is known.

Her footsteps then are heard  
When sleeping leaves are stirred ;

Her eyes more tender are  
Than twilight's only star ;

She breathes as when the plane  
Is fragrant after rain ;

Her voice is that deep speech  
Which music yearns to reach.

To her pure lips I clung  
When boyhood's leaf was young ;

Her soul possessed the maid  
When love was first afraid ;

But now that love is bold,  
The gray consumes the gold.

Sweet is the sultry noon  
Of lusty full-blown June,

And sweet the golden fruit  
Of love's accomplished suit ;

But sweeter twilight's hour  
And love's unfolding flower.

## TO THE COWSLIP

OF all spring joys, the dearest is  
To drink thy breath again,  
Freshest of flowers ;  
The bluebell lights the copse,  
The primrose paves the glen,  
But thy frank beauty overtops  
In open fields  
The new-born grass, to meet the kiss  
Of sun and wind and showers,  
And yields  
Spring's essence from those five red drops  
That dyed the breast of Imogen.

Sun-freckled art thou, as the child  
Who kneeleth down to snap  
Thy sturdy stem,  
And fill with thy pure gold  
Her snowy-aproned lap,  
White treasury of wealth untold ;  
Deftly she makes,  
In bountiful profusion piled,  
A regal ball of them,  
And takes  
For sceptre one that high doth hold  
His head in pride of April sap.

My earliest love of flowers, how good  
To lay my sunburnt face  
In grass so lush  
It shames the name of green,  
And fold in one embrace  
The clustered heads of all I glean,

And kiss the pure  
Warm lips of that fair sisterhood,  
Or 'mid their golden flush  
Immure  
The splendour of some cowslip queen  
Who reigned apart in loftier grace.

Then home to sleep by Avon stream,  
Cheered by the honest wine  
Of cowslip flowers ;  
So pure a draught alone  
Gives slumber so divine ;  
All night I breathe the sweet air blown  
O'er fields thick starred  
With cowslip constellations, dream  
Of gold-embasured towers  
That guard  
Some fay for whom the bees make moan,  
While cowslips by my cheek recline.



## A NOVEMBER PARABLE

Ah ! piteous sight !

While yet the weird moonlight  
Wove o'er the land her numbing spell,  
Not a leaf fell  
To break the crystal silence of the night.

But since the frost-subduing sun  
His azure signiory  
From the horizon-mist hath won,  
Whence his white troops in massive splendour loom,  
The stricken leaves unceasingly  
Down flutter to their tomb.

So one who long hath borne  
Grief's bitter cold,  
Till faith has failed and hope herself grown old,  
Endureth till the last chill hour is fled,  
But at the flash of joy's forgotten morn  
Drops dead.

## RUSSIA

(December, 1891)

As one, who finds the foe he sought to slay  
Prostrate within the shadow of the tomb,  
Forgets his wrath, so, grieving for thy doom,  
Huge wrestler with starvation, we would lay  
Our ancient grudge aside. The heavens are gray  
With pitiless calm, and walls of winter loom  
Around thy blighted plains ; while he, to whom  
Thou liftest ignorant hands, sits far away,  
Unenvied prisoner to a fatal throne,  
Spellbound, with nerveless arm and eye askance.  
So vast thy misery, one hope alone  
Rests—that, all else too weak, it may betide  
Hunger's grim hand by dreadful paths will guide  
Thy laggard feet to thy deliverance.

## REQUIESCAT

(October 6th, 1892)

PEACE!—for no feebler voice avails to sing  
The loss of him who best hath sung of loss.  
Nature herself with folded wing  
Stood mute ; the great night held its breath ;  
Solemn the moonlight watched across  
The mournful calm of summer's grave,  
When reverently the hand of death  
Earth's transitory chaplet took, and gave  
An everlasting wreath.

Peace!—let no sacrilegious strain  
Discordantly profane

The sanctuary of silence where he lies,  
Heedless of human worship, with the glow  
Of God's white lamp upon the closed eyes  
And cold imperial brow.

Nor let a hasty hand presume  
To lift the hallowed laurel from his tomb.

## POESY

He hears the music of his heart,  
But knows not whence the breath is blown ;  
It comes from regions far apart,  
With power beyond his own.

A presence at his side alights,  
A whisper at his ear is heard ;  
Amazed he takes the pen, and writes  
The inevitable word.

## TO THE REDBREAST

SWEET minstrel of the homes of men,  
Waylayer of my early walk,  
    Stay till this dahlia stalk  
        Is tied, and then  
            We'll talk.

There, pretty gossip!—now, come near,  
With jaunty tail, and head awry ;  
    Thou least, of things that fly,  
        Hast need to fear  
            Man's eye.

A gracious legend guardeth thee,  
My robin, with a hallowed name ;  
    And trustfulness so tame  
        Puts cruelty  
            To shame.

No prison waits for thee, dear ; who,  
Of all the joy-deserted throng  
    Who buy a captive song,  
    Would dare to do  
        Thee wrong ?

Yes, I remember well the nest,  
Six little bosoms brown-bespecked—  
    O tender architect—  
        And then each breast  
            Fire-flecked.

Yes ; summer's gone ; but what of that ?  
Now that her timid devotees  
    Are fled across the seas,  
        We two can chat  
            At ease.

We love to hear the bold wind blow,  
To see his random might deflower  
    The rocking elms, that shower  
        Their golden snow  
            Where cower



The sheep behind a shivering hedge ;  
We love the huddling clouds that rove  
    O'er the blue plain above  
        The horizon's edge ;  
            We love

The tones, by moisture richly dyed,  
Of winter's warm-hued nakedness,  
    When south winds blow, not less  
        Than autumn's pride  
            Of dress.

Then every voice but thine doth cease,  
While He, Who teacheth all to sing,  
    Is darkly pondering  
        His masterpiece,  
            The spring.

As faintly through the gloom and damp  
That fills some melancholy shrine,  
    When evening's brows decline,  
        A single lamp  
            Doth shine ;

So, when the mournful sunbeams slant  
Where summer lieth sepulchred,  
A throb of hope, bright bird,  
In thy spare chant  
Is heard.

## ESTRANGEMENT

No comfort in the world remains  
When love is fled ;  
'Tis but a coffin that contains  
The dead, the dead.

The unregarding wind sweeps by,  
Blank stares the heaven ;  
Indifferent along the sky  
The mist is driven.

Nursing their sorrow to and fro  
The sad boughs toss ;  
Winter bewaileth her own woe,  
And not our loss.

O Nature, who dost give relief  
To joy's full heart,  
Thou, when the soul is spent with grief,  
An alien art.

## THE LARK IN AUTUMN

THE day's long splendour dies  
A lingering death.—How still  
The sea of country lies  
Around this island hill.

The nestling sunbeams creep  
Beneath the boughs ; the gold  
Fades into gray, and sleep  
Descends on vale and wold.

God gave His wine all day,  
Eve brings His healing balm ;  
Care perished far away  
In yonder purple calm.

Joy's river, that hath run  
So swiftly, now doth flow  
Toward the setting sun  
With gathered fulness slow.—

But what bright spirit there  
Leaps into music?—Hark!  
The poet of the air,  
The sky's own soul,—the lark!

His song the dayspring seems,  
His pinions, as they soar,  
Are lustrous with the beams  
That light the land no more.

So often, at life's close,  
A thrill of youth's delight  
Invades its gray repose,  
And greets the dawn of night.

## MY STUDY

LET others strive for wealth or praise  
    Who care to win ;  
I count myself full blest, if He,  
Who made my study fair to see,  
Grant me but length of quiet days  
    To muse therein.

Its walls, with peach and cherry clad,  
    From yonder wold  
Unbosomed, seem as if thereon  
September sunbeams ever shone ;  
They make the air look warm and glad  
    When winds are cold.

Around its door a clematis  
Her arms doth tie ;  
Through leafy lattices I view  
Its endless corridors of blue  
Curtained with clouds ; its ceiling is  
The marbled sky.

A verdant carpet smoothly laid  
Doth oft invite  
My silent steps ; thereon the sun  
With silver thread of dew hath spun  
Devices rare—the warp of shade,  
The weft of light.

Here dwell my chosen books, whose leaves  
With healing breath  
The ache of discontent assuage,  
And speak from each illumined page  
The patience that my soul reprieves  
From inward death ;



Some perish with a season's wind,  
And some endure ;  
One robes itself in snow, and one  
In raiment of the rising sun  
Bordered with gold ;—in all I find  
God's signature.

As on my grassy couch I lie,  
From hedge and tree  
Musicians pipe ; or if the heat  
Subdue the birds, one crooneth sweet  
Whose labour is a lullaby,—  
The slumbrous bee.

The sun my work doth overlook  
With searching light ;  
The serious moon, the flickering star,  
My midnight lamp and candle are ;  
A soul unhardened is the book  
Wherein I write.

There labouring, my heart is eased  
Of every care ;  
Yet often wonderstruck I stand,  
With earnest gaze but idle hand,  
Abashed—for God Himself is pleased  
To labour there.

Ashamed my faultful task to spell,  
I watch how grows  
The Master's perfect colour-scheme  
Of sunset, or His simpler dream  
Of moonlight, or that miracle  
We name a rose.

There, in the lap of pure content,  
I still would keep  
The sabbath of a soul at rest ;  
Nor could I wish a close more blest  
Than there, when life's bright day is spent,  
To fall asleep.

## TO THE NEGLECTED MUSE

HIGH priestess of the temple where my soul  
    Would daily kneel !  
When happier singers make appeal  
    For grace, and I  
Neglect thy service, chide not, but condole  
    With thy poor votary.

Forget thee ?—ah ! this morning, when soft flights  
    Of sea-born cloud  
Sailed o'er the unregarding crowd  
    In that dense mart  
Where I am bound, remembrance of thy rites  
    Was torment to my heart ;

And now returning through the city's roar,  
    With toil opprest,  
    And marking how the liquid west  
        From cloud is free,  
Save one smooth bank that seems the printless shore  
    Of some untraversed sea,

I groan to think how twilight slowly fills  
    The spacious vale  
    Where I would watch with thee, how pale  
        Thy star-lamp shines,  
While sunset dies beyond the solemn hills  
    And nightfall stirs the pines.

Still would I seek thee by the stream which flows  
    Through that sweet shire,  
    Where he who lightliest touched the lyre  
        Is laid asleep,  
Till with its sister flood it found repose  
    In slumber of the deep.

There would I follow thee, would shut my ears  
    To pleasure's call ;  
But duty holdeth me in thrall,  
    My days rush by,  
And rarely through the driving rack appears  
    A space of quiet sky.

How should I sing when all my heart is kept  
    In bondage, vexed  
With strife, and all my brain perplexed  
    With many a thread  
Of tangled thought ; I have no song ; accept,  
    O Muse, my sighs instead.

Forget thee ?—if my fingers could unclasp  
    The lyre, and seize  
Life's cup, and drain it to the lees,  
    Then might I set  
My heart no more on joy beyond my grasp,  
    Ah ! then I might forget.

Once I had thought in that fair company  
    To find a place,  
    Who daily tend before thy face  
    The sacred fire ;  
But love and care with one another vie  
    To thrust me from the quire.

Yet sometimes 'mid the city's glare and grime,  
    Far from thy sight,  
    I stand thy silent acolyte ;  
    Enough for me ;  
I ask not thy regard, but only time,  
    Dear saint, to worship thee.

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